



# Representative Jim Buck

24TH DISTRICT



## 2002 Session Preview

Serving Clallam • Jefferson • and Grays Harbor counties

January 2002

Dear Friends,

**"There are tough challenges ahead, but I am confident we can avoid needless tax increases and protect the citizens of the 24th District by creating a responsible, sustainable state budget."**

That was my message to you in my November newsletter, and as the 2002 legislative session began Jan. 14, my position on this issue was stronger than ever.

In a year that would normally find us making mid-stream adjustments in the operating budget, we face the almost unimaginable job of grappling with a \$1.25 billion shortfall. The projections are bleak, but the financial crisis makes it clearer than ever that there is no substitute for bringing spending back within our means.

We will also be looking at ways to brighten the state's business climate and attract new industry and jobs. And we will resume work to address the long-term needs of Washington's transportation system.

**This scheduled 60-day session will be among the most difficult and challenging in state history, but it also presents unprecedented opportunities to make bold decisions that will get us back to the basics, separating "needs" from "wants," and protecting taxpayers, vital services, public safety and education.**

This newsletter outlines these and other items that we'll be addressing this year. It also includes a brief questionnaire on some of the issues that I believe are of interest to citizens in our district. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this survey. Your thoughts and opinions will help guide my decisions in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Rep. Jim Buck

**Legislative Hotline:**

1-800-562-6000

**Legislative information on the Internet:**

[www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov)

**State government on the Internet:**

[access.wa.gov](http://access.wa.gov)

### ■ Balancing the budget

State revenues have been impacted heavily by the recession — creating a \$1.25 billion shortfall. Some legislators have proposed raising taxes, but when families in our district and elsewhere in the state are facing job losses and their own financial challenges, this is not the time to burden them further. The Legislature must take the same approach that responsible families do when they fall on hard times — prioritize needs, cut spending and make every dollar count.

**The state's economy began weakening last year, a slump fueled by downturns in agriculture, high-tech and aerospace. Many of us warned last June that all the elements were in place for an economic train wreck, long before the tragic events of September 11. Now the bill has come due.**

I voted against the budget because it was full of poor fiscal planning and false promises. That said, we can't solve this mess with tax increases or bureaucratic spending gimmicks. It's going to be tough, but with bipartisan commitment, the Legislature can bring this budget back into balance and make it sustainable over the long term — without the need for new taxes.

### *Governor's budget plan would hurt vulnerable citizens*

The budget proposed by Gov. Locke cuts funding for public health services, disabled citizens, nursing homes and pharmacists who provide prescription drugs to low-income citizens on Medicaid. It would also raise taxes by \$100 million, despite the governor's assurances that he wouldn't do so.

**The governor said he wanted to protect Washington's most vulnerable people, and I support that goal. However, his budget approach does no such thing.**



## Rep. Jim Buck • Serving the 24th District

I was not aware, for example, that *state employees* were more vulnerable than senior citizens, people residing in rest homes, or the elderly or frail who survive on fixed incomes and need prescription drugs to stay alive.

**The bottom line is that the Locke budget still spends over \$1 billion more than we'll bring in this biennium, ignoring the real problem — the size and cost of state government.**

**I hear what families in the 24th District are telling me: There is no substitute for living within our means.**

### ■ Governor's budget proposal

<b>Total revenues:</b>	<b>\$21.374 billion</b>
<b>Total expenditures:</b>	<b>\$22.530 billion</b>
<b>Difference:</b>	<b>-\$1.156 billion</b>
<b>Ending fund balance:</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Emergency reserves:</b>	<b>\$303 million</b>

#### *Key budget cuts:*

**\$35 million for nursing homes**  
**\$54 million for higher education**  
**\$34 million for Medicaid reimbursements for prescription drugs**  
**\$14 million in block grants to K-12 schools**

#### *Tax increases:*

**3 percent liquor tax — \$4.7 million**  
**10 percent tax on gambling — \$73.7 million**  
**Use tax on shipping — \$20 million**  
**Hydraulic project fees — \$4.3 million**  
**Increase in hunting- and fishing-license fees — \$1 million**

### ■ Improving transportation

Agreement could not be reached last year on a comprehensive transportation funding plan, so it's back to the drawing board. When negotiations broke down over the summer, a number of critical projects were left without funding around the state. Among the key sticking points were proposals for a significant hike in the gas tax, an increase in the tax on diesel fuel, and a boost in fees paid by owners of trucks and recreational vehicles.

**The governor is out with a \$13.6 billion plan which is essentially the same proposal that lawmakers rejected last year. In addition to a 9-cent gas tax increase, Locke proposes an increased sales tax on car purchases, increased weight fees on trucks and recreational vehicles, and a \$50 license registration fee.**

### ■ Locke threat alienates communities

Like many legislators, I was disappointed by the governor's threat to retaliate against those in the Legislature who would oppose his 9-cent gas tax proposal. In a Seattle broadcast interview, Locke said lawmakers who don't vote for his plan, and its 9-cent increase in the gas tax, could see road projects in their districts excluded. He also took the occasion to warn that legislators who don't line up behind the plan also should not expect restoration of cuts in human services in their communities.

**These tactics don't equate with what I regard as leadership and statesmanship, and do little to bring people together to solve this statewide issue. What he's done is exacerbate the problem of rebuilding public confidence in government and elected officials.**

Instead of using the bully pulpit to educate citizens and build support for his package, Locke has chosen to use his pulpit to bully.

We can get the job done this session, but not by breaking promises and making threats to cut projects for anyone who doesn't think the governor's way is the only way.

### Election-year mail restrictions



As your state representative, I make every effort to keep you informed on what is happening in Olympia. However, this is an election year, and under the provisions of Initiative 134, I may only send two mailings during 2002, this newsletter being the first.

*During the 12 month period preceding the expiration of a legislator's term of office, no incumbent may mail at public expense a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature that is not in direct response to a constituent's request for a response or for information.*

*However, one mailing mailed within 30 days after the start of a regular legislative session and one within 60 days after the end of a regular session of identical newsletters to constituents are permitted.*

The initiative does allow me to respond to your direct request for information, but other mailings such as the **Budget Update** that was mailed in November, are not allowed. I encourage you to write or call me whenever you have a question, concern or an idea to share on legislation or other issues.



## 24th District Constituent Survey

### Transportation

1. Please rank the following transportation solutions in order of importance to you.

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | More roads and lanes of traffic                                   |
| _____ | _____ | Reducing traffic on existing roads                                |
| _____ | _____ | Better road maintenance   |
| _____ | _____ | Removing delays for commercial vehicles                           |
| _____ | _____ | Pedestrian and bike paths   |
| _____ | _____ | Sound barriers  |
| _____ | _____ | Better alternatives (such as rapid transit and local bus service) |

2. Gov Locke has proposed a \$13.6 billion transportation-funding plan which is similar to the proposal rejected by the Legislature last summer. It includes a 9-cent gas tax increase, an increased sales tax on vehicle sales, and higher weight fees for trucks and RVs. If placed on the ballot, how would you be inclined to vote on this package?

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |           |
|-------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | Yes       |
| _____ | _____ | No        |
| _____ | _____ | Undecided |

3. What is your opinion about putting the package to a public vote?

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | The public should be allowed to vote on it, absolutely                      |
| _____ | _____ | No, we elect lawmakers to represent us and they should make these decisions |
| _____ | _____ | I'm undecided as to whether the public should vote on it                    |

4. How much of a gas tax increase **would** you support?

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |                      |
|-------|-------|----------------------|
| _____ | _____ | 1-3 cents a gallon   |
| _____ | _____ | 4-6 cents a gallon   |
| _____ | _____ | 7-9 cents a gallon   |
| _____ | _____ | 10-15 cents a gallon |
| _____ | _____ | no increase          |

### Supermajority

5. Currently, school bonds and levies must receive approval from at least 60 percent of the voters to win passage. Some school districts have seen levies defeated, even though the issues received well over 50 percent of the vote. Do you favor lowering the levy requirement to 50 percent?

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |     |
|-------|-------|-----|
| _____ | _____ | Yes |
| _____ | _____ | No  |

### Legislative priorities

6. What do you believe are the most critical issues facing our state? Rank from a high of 1 to a low of 8 in order of importance.

Voter 1    Voter 2

- |       |       |                                |
|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| _____ | _____ | Reducing crime                 |
| _____ | _____ | Improving education            |
| _____ | _____ | Controlling taxes and spending |
| _____ | _____ | State transportation system    |
| _____ | _____ | Improving social services      |
| _____ | _____ | National security              |
| _____ | _____ | Washington business climate    |
| _____ | _____ | Property taxes                 |

### Comments:

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**Rep. Jim Buck**

P.O. Box 40600

Olympia, WA 98504-0600

## 2002 legislative calendar

**Monday, Jan. 14** — First day of session

**Friday, Feb 8** — Deadline for bills to be passed  
out of House committees

**Tuesday, Feb. 12** — Deadline for bills to clear  
House fiscal committees

**Tuesday, Feb. 19** — Deadline for House passage of  
bills originating in the House

**March 1** — Deadline for passage of Senate bills by  
House committees

**March 4** — Deadline to pass Senate bills out of  
House fiscal committees

**March 8** — Deadline to pass all bills out of both  
House and Senate chambers (5 p.m.)

**March 14** — Session adjourns (sine die)

***Making  
Your Voice  
Heard in  
Olympia!***

**Representative Jim Buck**  
**Serving the 24th District**

**Jim Buck**  
**State Representative**  
**(360) 786-7916**  
**[buck\\_ji@leg.wa.gov](mailto:buck_ji@leg.wa.gov)**

**Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000**

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P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

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*Representative*